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CranioSacrally Speaking: Centering the Session With Intention

By John E. Upledger, DO, OMM

The longer I practice as a therapeutic facilitator, the more I realize the power of intention. To this day, the kind of intention I use most often in my work is the simple intention to support whatever the client's "inner wisdom" wants to do at any given moment.

My first intention in a session, therefore, is to let the client know that whatever he or she wants to do is OK with me. I transmit this message non-verbally through my initial touch. On the outside we may be talking about many different things. Small talk is a wonderful distraction; it helps the body get past the mind's defenses. Yet while our voices may be saying one thing, our touch may be communicating something entirely different.

As the integration between conscious and subconscious awareness within the client progresses, I may very gently and with great sensitivity begin to verbalize what our touch has been communicating since the session began. Here's what that means in practical terms:

When I first put my hands on a client, I silently say, "If you want to do CranioSacral Therapy, that's what we'll do. Show me where to begin.

"If you have a pressing issue with an energy cyst, that's okay. We'll do that. Show me where you would like me to be.

"If SomatoEmotional Release is what you want to do, just start and I'll be with you. Go ahead and image all you want; please share those images with me. Perhaps I can help you understand what they are trying to tell you.

"We'll dialogue anytime you want to. Just let me know when you're ready. Whatever you think is the best way to come to resolution of this problem is OK with me. Let's do it."

It's wonderful to see how the client's body begins to respond to this offering of help. I don't have to say a word until his or her body tells me to start talking.

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According to my best memory, the mystery of what I now call "intentioned touch" and "blending" came into my conscious awareness as early as 1954. It was shortly after I finished my training as a hospital corpsman in the U.S. Coast Guard. I was placed on independent duty on a patrol ship in the Gulf of Mexico. There were no other medically trained personnel aboard the ship. I had finished 16 weeks of training and two months of internship in an outpatient clinic in New Orleans before being assigned to sea duty.

I was on the ship just a couple of days when the captain's steward sent word for me to see him. He was unable to walk due to a sudden pain in his left calf. He was lying on the deck grimacing, holding his leg and writhing about. I was trained in life-saving procedures and had no idea what to do here. There were about six or seven crew members present; I felt them watching and judging my ability. Let's just say the pressure was on.

I tried to look knowledgeable as I took his left leg between my two hands. I could feel a lot of heat and muscle contraction in his calf. Still, I had no idea what the problem was or what I could do about it. At a loss for anything else, I made my hands as gentle as I could and envisioned everything relaxing, the pain leaving, and the blood vessels and nerves normalizing. Within two or three minutes the steward smiled, said it felt fine and thanked me. Then he stood up, tested his leg, continued to smile and walked away. The onlookers also smiled their approval. From then on they called me "Doc."

At that moment I learned that if you intend to help the healing process and blend with the body tissues you're touching, things will usually get better. By "blending" I mean consciously envisioning the boundaries between your hands and the other person's body dissolving, and your hands entering the body.

To imagine how this might work, consider what happens when you have two bars of soap, one blue and one pink, and you place one on top of the other, wet them and wait. The two bars merge at their areas of contact and the colors blend with each other. You may even see a lavender color as the blue and pink mix. Similarly, the energies of our bodies mix and integrate when we consciously intend it to happen. When the relatively normal energy of the therapist blends with the problem, it dilutes the problem energy and moves it toward normal.

At the same time, if the therapist allows the problem energy to enter his or her body, an awareness of the problem can be perceived by the therapist. Since the entry of the problem into the therapist's body is consciously allowed, it can also be consciously removed - with intention, of course.

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